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ABSTRACT

Although successful by some standards, the basic writing program at Ball State University, Indiana, was altered over a period of several years because it was making incompatible demands on teachers and students alike. Public perception of the course allowed teachers some flexibility in writing instruction, but it demanded instruction in grammar and spelling. Pedagogically, instruction in formal grammar and discrete skills was unsound. Several principles guided the program director: (1) collaboration; (2) respect for faculty, for individual strengths and weaknesses; (3) respect for students, for individual strengths and differences; and (4) pragmatic politics. Major tasks included reshaping the public messages the program sent out about itself; implementing a "placement for success" formula and developing a portfolio placement procedure for students who "fall in the cracks"; evaluating writing rather than assessing competency in discrete skills in grammar and spelling; moving from a positivist, product-centered program to a social constructivist, process driven program with decentered programs; integrating assessment, pedagogy, and course goals; and developing and implementing program-wide portfolio assessment procedures. A sense of equity and of shared responsibility will be of prime importance as the program director and faculty contemplate further modifications. (RS)

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Directing a Basic Writing Program: Encouraging Diversity Among Students and Instructors

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Having taught in the Basic Writing Program at Ball State University before I began directing the program in 1985, I knew how much I valued the autonomy I had been given over my own classroom and pedagogy. My responsibility was to my students. As long as they consistently achieved the competency levels set for the program, which they did, the director didn't question my methods or my priorities. But when the entire program became my responsibility, I had to address the discrepancies between my own philosophy and the program as it stood--a 0-level, credit/no credit, basic skills course with competency-based exit tests in spelling, grammar and mechanics, and C or better grades on the final three impromptu essays.

To do that, however, I needed to build support for changing a smoothly running program. The approximately 1100 students we were serving each year (approximately 27% of the incoming class) were identified by SAT verbal scores of 360 or below, TSWE scores of 36 or below, or ACT scores of 15 or below. The Course itself, ENG 099, was described in The Writing Program, a booklet containing syllabi, departmental placement and grading standards, information about tutoring and manuscript preparation, and sample student essays for all four courses included in the General Studies Writing Program. The published syllabus described ENG 099, Fundamentals of English Composition, as "a remedial course in expected, basic competencies in writing, designed to prepare students to do the college level work required of them in ENG 103 and subsequent courses both in the English Department and at Ball State University in general." The course focused on "the fundamentals of English Composition, with special attention to the problems of grammar and mechanics." Requirements for course credit included three "C" level essays written in class at the end of the quarter and competency-level scores on spelling and language

skills tests. Although the specific course objective was "to improve the students' writing abilities so that they will be successful in ENG 103" (success being defined as earning the required minimum grade of C), a description of the course content appeared weighted toward "grammar and mechanics" (9 items listed) and "sentence construction" (5 items listed). "Paragraph construction" and "theme writing" warranted but a single listing each, although a separate listing of requirements did include a diagnostic and final theme, four short papers (frequently interpreted as single paragraphs of 150-200 words), and three regular themes (300 words required) as well as the pre- and post-language skills tests and pre- and post-spelling tests. The required texts were either the departmental favorite, Fawcett and Sandburg's Evergreen: A Guide to Basic Writing, which concentrates on paragraph development through rhetorical modes, or Sieben and Anthony's Composition Five: Skills for Writing which, although trying to integrate reading and writing, conveys by 2 to 1 bulk the message that grammar, mechanics, and spelling are more important than the reading skills and writing instruction offered in each chapter. By assuming responsibility for the program, I realized I was assuming responsibility for the message that instruction in basic skills constituted instruction in basic writing.

The climate in which I sought to alter the program was determined by legislative demands at the least for accountability and at most for the elimination of remedial courses at the university level, a dean and a provost whose orientations were quantitative, and a program with a successful track record: for ten years our continuing students had been averaging a C+ in ENG 103, a full half-grade higher than students placing initially in this first of two required writing courses. That track record, projected into the future, would satisfy demands for accountability.

So why tamper with success? Because the basic writing teachers who were committed to empowering their students, to providing academic outsiders the tools for succeeding in an academic community, found themselves serving a schizophrenic master: public perception of the course allowed them some flexibility in writing instruction, but it demanded instruction in grammar and spelling. Pedagogically, the instruction in formal grammar and discrete skills was unsound. Publicly, we were perceived as teaching students to produce correct texts. Politically, then, we needed quantitative data both to demonstrate the irrelevance of discrete skills instruction to writing improvement and assessment, and to shift the public perception of the course from "remedial" (only one step more enlightened than "bonehead" English) to "developmental," not different in type from our required writing courses. The course did not belong in the profile of "remedial" courses the legislature was seeking to eliminate from university level education. Our public messages had to change because we were making incompatible demands on teachers and students alike.

Several principles guided me:

1. **Collaboration.**

• I needed help in spreading a new message: instruction in basic skills does NOT constitute instruction in basic writing.

• When given the option, I chose the title Coordinator rather than Director of Basic Writing because it emphasized a collaborative effort rather than an authoritative hierarchical structure.

• I determined to involve faculty from the outset in making any changes. Any change in classroom behavior or pedagogy MUST come from the faculty. If they are not invested in the process, change will not occur in the classroom, and

it certainly won't occur quickly. The major tasks we undertook to reconfigure the program, then, were collaborative ventures.

2. Respect for faculty, for individual strengths and differences.

• Basic writing faculty at BSU are a select group of experienced writing teachers whose flexibility in responding to individual students' differences initially prompted each of them to request an assignment with basic writers. As Basic Writing Coordinator, I consciously and repeatedly selected faculty who respect students' individual strengths and differences.

• I also sought ways to both acknowledge and foster respect for our individual differences in teaching and learning styles.

-- Collaboration with its give and take of negotiation, of shared authority, functions on the same principles as those for decentering a classroom, implicitly valuing each individual's voice. Because we rely on master syllabi in the Writing Program rather than imposing a uniform syllabus for each course, we also rely upon collaboration, upon communally built assumptions and expectations, to maintain consistent quality in the progam.

-- Shared knowledge, I felt, could only strengthen the program and the impetus for change. Specific sessions during annual orientation, and in-house workshops and study groups during the academic year, were devoted to teaching and learning issues relevant to the Basic Writing Program. Of most significance for changing the classroom environment and empowering both teachers and students were sessions I began during orientation in 1986 on theories of cognitive development and learning styles. We explored Perry's, Vygotsky's, and Piaget's theories of cognitive development, focusing on the potentially limiting effect of simply labeling Basic Writers as developmentally behind their peers.

Only in conjunction with an examination of learning styles, however, could faculty actually move beyond a compassionate acceptance of flaws in a "developmentally deficient" label for basic writers. I used the Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory, which George has explained, to highlight differences both among the faculty and between the faculty and their basic writing students. Interpretation of individual types and ensuing discussion of the MBTI in general validated individual differences among faculty and specifically served to validate differences in their pedagogies and interpersonal styles. The long term effect of continued discussion of the MBTI within the program has been increased tolerance and respect for a variety of approaches to teaching as well as a greater willingness to try different approaches.

-- In addition to orientation sessions, workshops and study groups, I looked for other opportunities to support basic writing faculty development: grants to support program, collaborative, or individual research; funds to support travel to conferences; and a graduate seminar in Teaching and Researching Basic Writing. Since travel funds were becoming increasingly dependent upon acceptance to present a conference paper, and non-tenure- as well as tenure-line faculty all became eligible for departmental travel funds in 1986, the impetus to disseminate their work beyond the classroom increased significantly.

The graduate course provided one way of facilitating that by encouraging collaborative research between graduate students and basic writing faculty, by providing a locus for discussion of research in progress, and by offering additional faculty development options in terms of single session or full course audits. Five dissertations and two masters theses have emerged from research done in that class. Marsha's is a good example because two students in my graduate class took ethnographic field notes for her in the two basic writing

classes she was studying, and each made her participant-observer experience the focus of her own research. One, our session chair Becky Rickly, wrote about the problems of reflexivity in research, and the other examined her field notes in terms of the students' and Marsha's personality types. Research like theirs that focuses on the individual human beings in our classrooms and that tests or at least questions common assumptions can help us foster respect for individual strengths and differences of both faculty and students.

3. Respect for students, for individual strengths and differences.

• To celebrate and encourage diversity among basic writers, we must respect their individual strengths and differences. Building on the basic writing faculty's predisposition to acknowledge individual differences in students' writing processes, the comparison of faculty and student MBTI profiles was instructive. For comparison I used general population data from the MBTI national data bank, the MBTI profile for 3294 students in the 1984 Ball State University freshman class (administered at matriculation for the last time that year), the profile of the 214 at-risk students in Ball State's University College in 1986, the profile of 14 students in a single basic writing class, and the profile of the 18 basic writing faculty in the 1986 orientation session.

Distribution of Isolated Preferences

	MBTI	1984	1986	1986	1986
	GenPop	N=3294	N=214	N=14	N=18
E (Extrovert)	70%	**64%**	**61%**	**64%**	5.5%
I (Introvert)	30%	36%	39%	36%	**94.5%**

	MBTI GenPop	1984 N=3294	1986 N=214	1986 N=14	1986 N=18
S (Sensing)	70%	**59%**	**70%**	**50%**	11%
N (iNtuitive)	30%	41%	30%	50%	**89%**
T (Thinking)	50%	47%	42%	29%	**83.5%**
F (Feeling)	50%	**53%**	**58%**	**71%**	16.5%
J (Judging)	50%	**61%**	**56%**	36%	**67%**
P (Perceiving)	50%	39%	44%	**64%**	33%

The predominantly INTJ preferences of the basic writing faculty are dramatically set against the basic writing or at risk students' preferred learning styles. Self-selection for higher education tends to attract a greater number of individuals with preferences for introversion and intuition, and among these faculty selected for their success in working with basic writers, the thinking, and judging preferences emerge strongly as well. My concern was for faculty to understand some of the consequences of playing out those differences. The ESFJ preferences predominant among the entering freshman class as well as the at-risk population diverge somewhat from the general population distributions, but the basic writers' additional preference for Perceiving as their orientation to the outside world means that many of them are clustered in types opposite those of their teachers. The students will derive their energy from external sources while the faculty tend to derive theirs from internal sources; they will attend to incoming information differently from the faculty; they will more often make decisions based on feeling while the faculty will most often depend on thinking; and they will tend

to remain open to possibilities in the outside world while most of the faculty would seek closure.

• Armed with such knowledge of student and faculty profiles as well as of the individual differences reflected in the profiles, faculty began to embrace portfolios as a more flexible frame for teaching and learning. In various guises they required journals and reflective writing in order to provide opportunity for students to gain perspectives on themselves as writers and on themselves in the context of community. In class after class, the emphasis was shifting from mastery of discrete skills to the development of students' writing abilities through a growing self-understanding of their own composing processes.

4. Pragmatic politics.

• My fourth guiding principle is pragmatic: Change what can be changed immediately; build a base to support subsequent changes when the opportunity arises; and work to create that opportunity through whatever channels are available within the department, college, and university--committees, sympathetic ears, even routine administrative reports which can be used to contextualize and to persuade. As rhetoricians we need to be aware of not only the immediate but also the larger contexts in which our words may be heard or read--public, legislative, administrative, academic.

Major tasks:

My last guiding principle, pragmatic politics, really segues into the first of the major tasks I faced in 1985--changing the public perception of our basic writing courses. But that task, of course, was tied to the other major tasks I identified--issues of placement, assessment, pedagogy, and integration of

assessment and pedagogy with course goals. I began by looking at the program from the outside.

1. Public Perception

If we were ever to create a positive public and legislative perception of basic writing courses--as developmental rather than remedial; as a complex integration of listening, speaking, reading, thinking, and writing skills rather than as a simplistic parceling of grammar, sentence construction, and paragraph construction--we had to reshape the public messages we send. At the core of those messages are assessment tools. Course title and catalog descriptions, program descriptions, text selection, and even the leanest syllabi will reflect the values inherent in a program's assessment tools. The very presence of competency testing in grammatical skills at the conclusion of a writing course, for example, implies that the skills it presumes to test are important and that instruction time should be devoted to such skills. At the same time, however, the value of the course is diminished by the 0-level course number, the lack of credit hours toward graduation, and the lack of a letter grade. Consider the differences between these 1985 and 1993 descriptions:

Course Description [1985]

ENG 099 Fundamentals of English Composition (5): Focuses on the fundamentals of English Composition, with special attention to the problems of grammar and mechanics. Required of all students having an SAT (V) score of 360 or lower, or a TSWE score of 36 or lower, or an ACT English score of 15 or lower. Available on a credit/no credit basis only and credit hours will not count toward any graduation requirement.

Course Description [1993]

ENG 101 Fundamentals of English Composition 1 (2)
ENG 102 Fundamentals of English Composition 2 (2)

A portfolio-based course, taken over two consecutive semesters, focusing on the development of effective composing, revising, and editing strategies. Introduction to basic research methods. Prerequisite for 101: the appropriate combination of TSWE or ACT score and high school rank. Prerequisite for 102: Credit in 101.

Not only has the course been redefined as a writing course rather than a discrete skills course, a significant change that entered the catalog in 1989, but it has also been fully integrated into the General Studies Writing Program as a graded, credit-bearing course. Even the negative phrasing about the single score placement procedures has been replaced by a neutral statement that identifies a more complex placement system. The total credit hours have changed from 5 to 4, but for any student who would have been placed in ENG 099 in 1985, the total credit hours necessary to complete the General Studies writing requirement would have been 11 and only 6 would have counted; today all credits count toward graduation, and such a student would be required to take a total of 7 hours to complete the General Studies writing requirement.

The course itself, rather than being preliminary to required Composition I (ENG 103) and Composition II (ENG 104) as it was in 1985, has been replaced by a two-semester course equivalent to ENG 103 in the General Studies writing requirements. It is no longer a remedial, pre-university course but an entrance-level course as the following excerpts reveal:

Relation of Course to Other Courses [1985]

> This is a remedial course in expected, basic competencies in writing, designed to prepare students to do the college level work required of them in ENG 103 and subsequent courses both in the English Department and at Ball State University in general.

Relation of Course to Other Courses [1993]

> This is an entrance-level course designed to prepare students over two semesters to begin ENG 104. It provides students with more individualized attention and with additional time to develop those skills needed to succeed in other writing courses.

Even the objectives finally demonstrate that students placed into ENG 101/102 will be actively participating in required, college level writing courses:

Objectives of Course [1985]

> The course objective is to improve the students' writing abilities so that they will be successful in ENG 103.

Objectives of Course [1993]

In this course students should

a. begin to understand the role language plays in society, particularly within the academic community;
b. develop a facility for the critical thinking necessary for college work (especially the effective use of evidence and inference);
c. understand and practice basic methods of research, including skill in the use of a university research library;
d. understand and practice a variety of forms of writing;
e. develop essential skills for using a computer to write and to discuss ideas with others;
f. understand and practice the organizational concepts of focus and development in writing essays;
g. acquire habits of accuracy and clarity in composing sentences and paragraphs;
h. develop editing skills regarding grammar, mechanics, and usage appropriate to various contexts.

Course content varies dramatically as well. As I indicated earlier, the emphasis on grammar and mechanics seemed unduly heavy in the 1985 listing:

Course Content [1985]

a) Grammar and mechanics
- Complete sentences
- Subject-verb agreement
- Pronoun-antecedent agreement
- Modification problems
- Verb forms and usage
- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spelling

b) Sentence construction
- Parts of speech
- Sentence types and/or patterns
- Subordination
- Syntactic complexity

c) Paragraph construction

d) Theme writing

More than any other group of students, those who find themselves placed in "basic" writing classes for whatever reasons need to become aware both of the roles language and literacy play in our society and of themselves as language users in both oral and written forms. Current Course Content reflects that shift in focus and in epistemology: the course is clearly a writing course, and writing is perceived as an act within a social context. Grammar and mechanics, rather than being ends in themselves, support writing tasks.

Course Content [1993]

Students in ENG 101/102 will
a. read about and discuss the role of language and literacy in social institutions
b. study and practice the writing process (invention, drafting, revising)
c. read and discuss a variety of writing forms
d. study and practice basic rhetorical forms
e. study and practice writing based on basic research procedures . . .
f. study and practice sentence construction, including sentence types and/or patterns, subordination, and syntactic complexity
g. study and practice usage appropriate to various contexts

The public documents are beginning to change the public perception of our two-semester course, but it takes a long time and repeated messages to alter deep-seated assumptions about students who do not meet particular gatekeeping criteria.

2. Placement

Gatekeeping criteria appear frequently in placement procedures if not in the expectations that first-year writing courses "flunk out" the students who should not be in college. We sought to change those assumptions. With the first program-wide study examining our students' performance in relation to information from their high school records and standardized exams, we sought to establish procedures to place students for success. A multiple regression analysis of all data that potentially contributes to the model of predictive validity enabled us to move from single score placement to a set of formulae using multiple measures with predictive validity for our students. (Study described in "Pragmatic Politics," Journal of Basic Writing, Spring 1990.) The Test of Standard Written English (a subscore of the SAT) and high school class rank in inverse relationships acknowledged both motivation and achievement contributing to our students' performances in our writing classes. We gained support for implementing the placement for success formula and then began developing a portfolio placement procedure for students who "fall in the

cracks" of the standard placement formula. As we examine our alternatives to the phased-out TSWE, we have included corresponding ACT scores in the formlae.

ENG 101/102 Placement
TSWE of 27 (ACT 16) and below (HS Rank irrelevant), or
TSWE of 28-31 (ACT 17) and HS Rank below 65%, or
TSWE of 32-35 (ACT 18) and HS Rank below 55%, or
TSWE of 36-41 (ACT 19-20) and HS Rank below 40%, or
TSWE of 42-44 (ACT 21) and HS Rank below 30%

ENG 104 Placement
TSWE of 45 (ACT 22) and above with HS Rank of 85% and above

ENG 114 Placement
TSWE of 45 (ACT 22) and above with HS Rank of 90% and acceptance into the Honors Program

ENG 103 Placement
A combination of TSWE scores and HS Rank that exclude ENG 101/102 or ENG 104 placement

3. Assessment

The assessment issue, as I indicated earlier, is central to public perceptions of the course. Placement is an assessment issue; so too are competency and achievement. Course syllabi may specify individual faculty's requirements, but the public syllabus conveys unmistakably what the program values:

Requirements and Writing Assignments [1985]
Pre- and post-language skills test
Pre- and post-spelling test
Diagnostic and final theme
Four short papers
Three regular themes

The shift to portfolios, to a context-driven process orientation, now appears in the frame of accompanying assignments related to the course goals. We are now specifically evaluating writing rather than assessing competency in discrete skills in grammar and spelling.

Requirements and Writing Assignments [1993]

ENG 101	ENG 102
Assigned readings, exercises, quizzes, and campus activities.	Assigned readings, exercises, quizzes, and campus activities.
Language skills pre-test*	Language skills post-test*
Diagnostic theme	Course-related research and computer instruction.
Course-related research and computer instruction.	Final timed essay
Final timed essay	Portfolio with six essays, three of which will be chosen for competency evaluation
Portfolio with six essays, three of which will be chosen for competency evaluation	

*Pre- and post-language skills tests correlate to the TSWE and are being used for research purposes.

4. Pedagogy

Efforts to change public perceptions of basic writers, and to alter our placement and assessment procedures, have had both direct and indirect effects on pedagogy. Generally we have moved from a positivist, product centered program to a social constructivist, process driven program with decentered classrooms. Collaborative development of portfolio procedures and public documents have contributed to that shift, but perhaps it is most evident in the texts that basic writing faculty have selected for the program. The skills approach evident in 1985 has been supplanted by a rhetorical approach.

Texts [1985]

Required in all sections:
- *The Writing Program, 1985-86*
- *The Little Brown Handbook*, 2nd ed., with supplement
- A college dictionary

Instructors will choose one of the following texts:
- *Evergreen: A Guide to Basic Writing*
  Fawcett and Sandburg
  OR
- *Composition Five: Skills for Writing*
  Silben and Anthony

Texts [1994]
Required in *all* sections:
The Writing Program, 1993-94
A college dictionary
Instructors will choose from the following texts for one or both semesters:
Readers:
Motives for Writing, Miller and Webb (Mayfield)
The Writer in You: A Writing Process Reader, Lounsberry (HarperCollins)
Rhetorics:
A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing, Elbow and Belanoff (Random House)
Write to Learn, 4th ed., Murray (Holt, Rinehart, Winston)

[or instructors could select texts from those listed for ENG 103]

5. Integration

Integrating assessment, pedagogy, and course goals is clearly tied to the public messages we send. "Pragmatic Politics" (JBW Spring 1990) details efforts to demonstrate the relevance (or irrelevance) of competency testing components. And portfolios have emerged as a response to needs for integration. The first major change, redefining basic writing as a writing course rather than a discrete skills course, appeared in the catalog in 1989, the year Marsha conducted her study but one semester too late to affect her class.

The basic writing faculty's expertise and commitment to their students and the program enabled us to embark collaboratively on the holistic grading of a single writing sample that served as one of the competency assessment tools by Fall 1989. The primary assessment tool, a portfolio of three fully revised

essays (with drafts), was to be graded by the classroom teacher while the fifty-minute writing sample would be graded holistically on reading day by at least two other basic writing faculty. The results of the holistic reading contributed to the classroom teacher's assessment of competency and helped both faculty and students recognize that the variability in a writer's production of text means that no single measure of writing could be used to certify competency. The training and grading sessions not only ensured interjudge reliability in holistic scoring, then, but they also reinforced whole-process instruction and encouraged program-consistent evaluation of the portfolios by the classroom teachers. The combination of assessment tools maintained the integrity of the learning environment.

The next step in developing program-wide portfolio assessment came Spring 1990 when university officials decided to drop all 0-level or "remedial" courses. Because our Basic Writing Program had a successful track record, however, the Department of English was given two years to restructure the Writing Program to meet the needs of all our students. The Writing Committee developed ENG 101/102 as an entrance-level portfolio-based course designed to prepare at-risk students over two consecutive semesters to begin ENG 104, the second composition course in The Writing Program sequence required of all university students. ENG 101 and ENG 102 each carry two credits for which a student receives a letter grade, and together they satisfy the General Studies

requirement for the first composition course in The Writing Program sequence.

Concern about establishing consistent expectations across the ENG 101/102 sequence prompted us the year before the sequence was instituted to explore collaborative reading of full portfolios. Analysis of portfolios submitted over three semesters of ENG 099 had revealed a predominance of personal experience and narrative essays selected by the students as their "best writing." Whether faculty were limiting the forms of writing they required, or students were simply investing most in those forms and peers were recognizing that investment, or faculty were rewarding them most, the same results, if extended into ENG 101/102, would be inadequate to meet expectations for the first required composition course.

The current portfolio procedures and scoring guide were developed collaboratively by the faculty teaching in the Basic Writing Program during 1991-92. Knowing that we would be moving from credit/no credit to grades as summative course evaluations, and knowing from holistic grading sessions that the faculty valued strategies and features of texts differently, I asked all twenty-five basic writing faculty to participate during the 1991-92 academic year in one of the study groups fleshing out the specific expectations for ENG 101 and 102, the corresponding assessment procedures, and details for portfolio requirements. Groups met separately, reporting back to the whole periodically and allowing for re-formation of groups at semester break.

A few faculty, wanting to ensure that we considered alternatives to numerical evaluation, began their inquiry by focusing on how we respond to student writing, both as coaches and as evaluators. They were enthusiastic about portfolios in the classroom, but were concerned about shifting the primary writer-reader relationship outside the classroom when their most

vulnerable students had only begun to address the dynamics of rhetorical situations--real and invented--within those classrooms.

Armed with several years of holistic scoring experience and the criteria we had developed in training sessions, other groups examined portfolio models and assessment procedures and instruments as they worked to articulate criteria to satisfy our course objectives. The portfolio variations in texts, in types of writing, in readers' processes of evaluating all seemed to demand that we spend time negotiating our differences and reshaping our communal language and our expectations.

We seem once again to be elaborating the "PTP" arc described by Phelps: practice to theory and back to practice, where a problem or crisis generates theory, methodology, and research to find a solution which may in turn alter changes in practice. The faculty's collaborative work developing the portfolio procedures and conducting the assessment does maintain coherence and consistency within this sequence designed for academically at-risk students.

While no single instrument could measure whether students have met all the stated objectives of ENG 101/102, the portfolio enables us to measure students' mastery of the complexities of written communication by considering both features of texts and the discourse strategies employed in the four portfolio texts. As in ENG 099, students still select three of their best essays developed over time to submit for portfolio evaluation. As they evaluate the writing they have done in order to make their choices, they are asked to consider what they have done well, how they have grown as writers, what new perspectives time and experience have given them on early texts. They must be able to state their reasons for choosing a particular text, but in addition to reflection and self-evaluation they can take advantage of peer

evaluation and teacher response to earlier drafts. At the end of the term students are asked to bring their reflections on their portfolios together in a single text which is included as the fourth writing sample. We chose not to dictate contents of portfolios the first year of the sequence but instead to rely on analytic scoring of discourse acts to describe what students had actually achieved half way through the sequence (ENG 101) and again at the end (ENG 102).

All faculty teaching the two-semester sequence participate in portfolio evaluation as part of their load for the course. Smaller class size (18 as opposed to 25 in Composition I and II) helps to offset the additional time spent in collaborative grading; but frankly, commitment to the students, the program, and colleagues keeps the faculty coming back. Negotiating procedures, writing tasks, and relative values of text features or rhetorical acts over time builds a collaborative community invested in the process

A sense of equity and of shared responsibility, we have learned, is of prime importance as we contemplate any further modifications. The principles of collaboration, respect for the individual strengths and differences of both faculty and students, and pragmatic politics have enabled us to effect the changes you have seen.